

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A process for preparing a polymer comprising (meth)acrylate salt units by a free-radical polymerization of a (meth)acrylate salt optionally with ~~or without another~~ a second monomer in an aqueous medium, which comprises using a supersaturated aqueous solution of the (meth)acrylate salt.

2. (Currently amended) The process of claim 1 wherein the supersaturated aqueous solution of the (meth)acrylate salt ~~used~~ comprises 40 to 90 mol% of the (meth)acrylate salt and 10 to 60 mol% of a (meth)-acrylic acid.

3. (Currently amended) The process of claim 1 ~~or 2~~ wherein the supersaturated aqueous solution of the (meth)acrylate salt is cooled ~~down~~ to below 40°C by producing a more than 100 mol% neutralized first (meth)acrylate salt solution and subsequently a (meth)-acrylic acid is added in a continuous operation and, prior to the complete precipitation of the resulting (meth)acrylate salt, is fed to a polymerization reactor and polymerized.

4. (Currently amended) The process of ~~any of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 3 wherein the polymerization reactor ~~for the polymerization~~ is a continuous kneading reactor, a spray polymerization reactor, or a continuous polymerization belt.

5. (Currently amended) The process of ~~any of claims 1 to 4~~ claim 2 wherein the (meth)acrylic acid ~~comprising~~ comprises not more than 2000 ppm of dimers and less than 150 ppm of hydroquinone monomethyl ether ~~is used as an acidic monomer.~~

6. (Currently amended) The process of ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~ claim 1 wherein the supersaturated aqueous solution comprises 0.001 to 5 mol% of one or more monomers comprising two or more ethylenically ~~unsupersaturated~~ unsaturated double bonds.

7. (Currently amended) The process of ~~any of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1 wherein the supersaturated aqueous monomer solution is prepared using a solid anhydrous (meth)acrylate salt.

8. (Currently amended) The process of ~~any of claims 1 to 7~~ claim 1 wherein the supersaturated aqueous solution is prepared using a solid (meth)acrylate salt having a water content from 0.1% to 10% by weight.

9. (Currently amended) The process of ~~any of claims 1 to 8~~ claim 1 wherein the (meth)acrylate salt is used in the form of a supersaturated aqueous solution or dispersion obtained by neutralization of (meth)acrylic acid with aqueous hydroxide solution, a hydroxide, carbonate, or hydrogen carbonate.

10. (Currently amended) The process of ~~any~~
~~preceding~~ claim 1 wherein the (meth)acrylate and the
(meth)acrylic acid ~~denotes~~ comprises acrylate and
acrylic acid.

11. (Currently amended) The process of ~~any~~
~~preceding~~ claim 1 wherein the (meth)acrylate salt
~~denotes~~ comprises alkali metal (meth)acrylate ~~and~~
~~especially sodium~~ (meth)acrylate.

12. (Currently amended) A polymer compris-
ing (meth)acrylate units, ~~obtainable~~ prepared by the
process of ~~claims~~ claim 1 to 11.

13. (Currently amended) ~~The use of a solid~~
~~salt of a (meth)acrylate for~~ A method of preparing a
polymer ~~by~~ comprising dissolving a solid salt of a
(meth)acrylate in water to form a supersaturated aque-
ous monomer solution and polymerizing the monomer
solution in the presence ~~or absence~~ of another an
optional second monomer.

14. (New) The process of claim 1 wherein
the (meth)acrylate salt comprises sodium (meth)acryl-
ate.